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QUIVIRA

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NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

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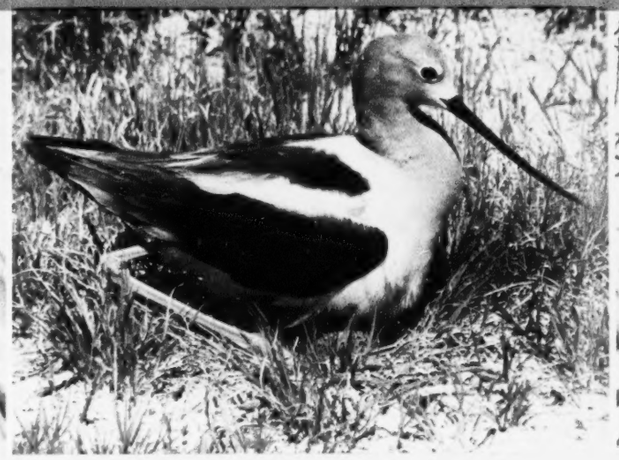
Marsh Hawk: Photo by David Drobac.



American Avocet: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Photo.

Raccoon: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Photo.

Great Blue Heron: Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Photo.

HISTORY

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is located in south-central Kansas and lies in the transition zone of eastern and western vegetation. Quivira was established in 1955 when the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission approved purchase of land to create the Refuge. Acquisition was completed in 1969, and Quivira is now 21,820 acres in size.

The name "Quivira" was given to a tribe of Indians living in the area by Coronado in 1451. The expedition reached what is now Kansas and the Quivira area in their search for the golden treasures of the fabled "Seven Cities of Cibola." What Coronado found instead was prairie grassland, abundant wildlife, and small agricultural villages of local Indian tribes.

The area encompassed by Quivira NWR has a history of waterfowl use. Little Salt Marsh and Big Salt Marsh are ancient basins that have seen hundreds of thousands of waterfowl arriving as they migrate north or south. The marshes have always provided natural food, cover, and a place to rest for the weary birds.

These marshes were utilized for waterfowl hunting by Indians and early settlers. Shortly after the turn of the century, private hunting clubs were established. Commercial hunting provided waterfowl by the wagonload to restaurants in Kansas City and other points east. Improvements were made to the marshes when the hunting clubs dug a permanent channel to permit Rattlesnake Creek to flow directly into Little Salt Marsh. Later, Refuge development provided another canal to divert water from Rattlesnake Creek to Big Salt Marsh.

Today, Quivira NWR continues to provide the elements needed for traditional resting stops of birds in migration.

WILDLIFE AND MANAGEMENT

Quivira NWR is primarily managed to provide food, water, and protection for migratory waterfowl. Other birds and resident wildlife species also benefit from the various management programs. Cooperative farming programs provide about 1000 acres of winter wheat and sorghum grains. Some of the grain is left standing in the fields for wildlife use. A system of 15 miles of canals and 25 miles of dikes provides nearly 5,000 acres of managed wetlands and marshes. Grazing, haying, and prescribed burning are utilized to manage and manipulate vegetation.

The Santana Natural Area has been set aside to maintain an example of the original prairie that confronted the pioneers as they arrived from the East. This 362-acre remnant of prairie contains stabilized sand dunes and 15 acres of century-old cottonwoods originally planted as a timber claim.

A BIRD WATCHER'S PARADISE

Birds characteristic of both eastern and western North America are found at Quivira NWR. Fall flights of thousands of Canada geese, mallards, and other migratory birds pass through the Refuge from September to December. There may be over 100,000 ducks and geese present until severe weather drives them from the area. Quivira NWR becomes a staging area for 500,000 birds during the spring migration.

Bald and golden eagles winter on the Refuge from November until March. Swainson's hawk and the Mississippi kite are summer residents. Marsh hawks, kestrels, and red-tailed hawks are common throughout the year.

White pelicans, sandhill cranes, and a variety of shorebirds are regular migrants. The endangered whooping crane may make a brief visit in the fall and occasionally in the spring. Snowy plovers, least terns, and avocets are common nesting species and the black-necked stilt and white-faced ibis have been recorded as nesting in recent years.

If you are not a birdwatcher, you will be surprised to learn how many shorebirds, upland birds, and waterfowl can be seen on the Refuge. Pick up a bird list at the Refuge Headquarters.

Other wildlife frequently seen on the Refuge includes white-tailed deer, beaver, black-tailed prairie dogs, raccoons, and coyotes.

Canada geese landing: Photo by Luther C. Goldman.

VISITING QUIVIRA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

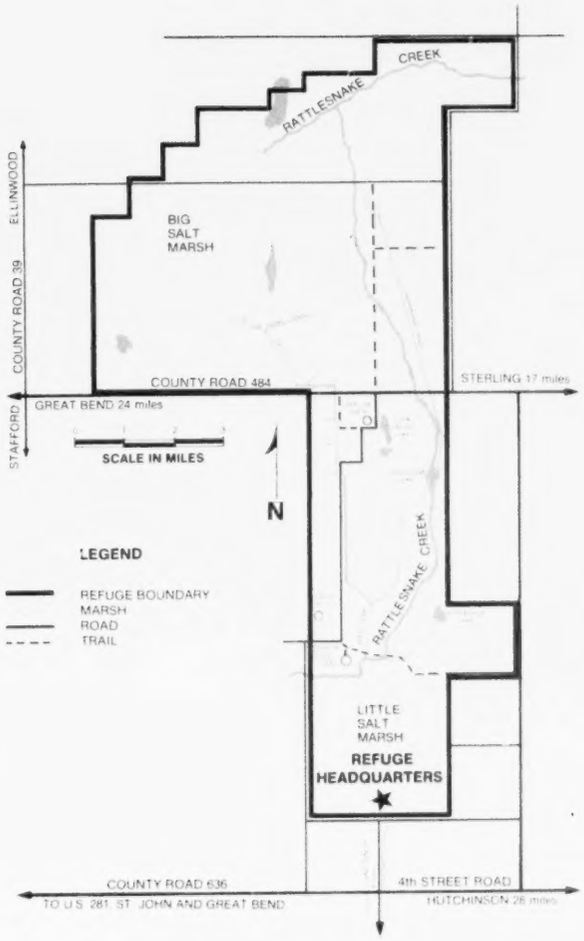
Spring and fall are the best seasons to visit Quivira NWR. Wildlife, especially waterfowl, are at their peak during these times. Visitors may drive township roads through the Refuge and along its boundaries. During fishing season, the dike across Little Salt Marsh is also open to travel. Most wildlife can be seen from these roads. The best time to view or photograph wildlife is generally in the early morning or late afternoon.

Overnight camping is not permitted on the Refuge. There are no water, picnic, or public sanitation facilities available. However, food and lodging are available locally in Stafford, Great Bend,and Hutchinson.

Hunting and fishing are permitted in accordance with State and Refuge seasons and regulations.

For further information, contact the Refuge Manager, P.O. Box G, Stafford, Kansas, 67578. Telephone: (316) 486-2393.

Prairie Dog: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Photo.



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